



South Carolina
Department of Education

Together, we can

Academic Plans for Students Program Information Handbook

DRAFT

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South Carolina Department of Education
Division of Accountability,
Office of Federal and State Accountability,
Planning and Support Section

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Program Overview

The Education Accountability Act ((S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-500 (Supp. 2007)), requires that schools must develop individual Academic Plans for Students (APSs) for those students in grades three through eight who do not meet grade level standards. The intent in requiring the development of APSs for students not currently at grade level is to provide these students with the tools and assistance they need in order to achieve at or above grade level. Schools, parents, and students must work together to accomplish this goal.

Section 1

Relevant Regulatory References

The Education Accountability Act of 1998

AN ACT TO AMEND CHAPTER 18 OF TITLE 59, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, ARTICLE 5 ACADEMIC PLANS FOR STUDENTS

Article 5

Academic Plans for Students

Section 59-18-500 SECTION 59-18-500. Academic plan for student lacking skills to perform at current grade level; review of results; development of statewide policies.

(A) Beginning in 1998-99 and annually thereafter, at the beginning of each school year, the school must notify the parents of the need for a conference for each student in grades three through eight who lacks the skills to perform at his current grade level based on assessment results, school work, or teacher judgment. At the conference, the student, parent, and appropriate school personnel will discuss the steps needed to ensure student success at the next grade level. An academic plan will be developed to outline additional services the school and district will provide and the actions the student and the parents will undertake to further student success.

(B) The participants in the conference will sign off on the academic plan, including any requirement for summer school attendance. Should a parent, after attempts by the school to schedule the conference at their convenience, not attend the conference, the school will appoint a school mentor, either a teacher or adult volunteer, to work with the student and advocate for services. A copy of the academic plan will be sent to the parents by certified mail.

(C) At the end of the school year, the student's performance will be reviewed by appropriate school personnel. If the student's work has not been at grade level or if the terms of the academic plan have not been met, the student may be retained or he may be required to attend summer school for promotion. If there is a compelling reason

why the student should not be required to attend summer school or be retained, the parent or student may appeal to a district review panel.

(D) At the end of summer school, a district panel will review the student's progress and report to the parents whether the student's academic progress indicates readiness to achieve grade level standards for the next grade. If the student is not at grade level or the student's assessment results show standards are not met, the student will be placed on academic probation. A conference of the student, parents, and appropriate school personnel will revise the academic plan to address academic difficulties. At the conference it must be stipulated that academic probation means if either school work is not up to grade level or if assessment results again show standards are not met, the student will be retained. The district's appeals process remains in effect.

(E) Each district board of trustees will establish policies on academic conferences, individual student academic plans, and district level reviews. Information on these policies must be given to every student and parent. Each district is to monitor the implementation of academic plans as a part of the local accountability plan. Districts are to use Act 135 of 1993 academic assistance funds to carry out academic plans, including required summer school attendance. Districts' policies regarding retention of students in grades one and two remain in effect.

(F) The State Board of Education, working with the Oversight Committee, will establish guidelines until regulations are promulgated to carry out this section. The State Board of Education, working with the Accountability Division, will promulgate regulations requiring the reporting of the number of students retained at each grade level, the number of students on probation, number of students retained after being on probation, and number of students removed from probation. This data will be used as a performance indicator for accountability.

Special Budget Proviso

1A.52. (SDE-EIA: EAA Summer School, Grades 3-8) Funds appropriated for summer school shall be allocated to each local public school district based on the number of academic subject area scores below the basic on the prior year Spring PACT administration for students in grades three through eight and on the number of students entering ninth grade who score below proficient in reading. Individual student scores on the PACT shall not be the sole criterion used to determine whether a student on an academic plan the prior year will be placed on probation or retained. Individual student scores on the PACT shall not be the sole criterion for requiring students to attend summer school. School districts may consider other factors such as student performance, teacher judgment, and social, emotional, and physical development in placing students on academic probation or requiring summer school attendance. Students may not be placed on academic probation or retained based solely on the PACT scores. The State Department of Education working with the Education Oversight Committee must develop a method to supplement the PACT with diagnostic training and materials aligned to the content standards. Current year appropriations may be expended for prior year EAA summer school purposes. Local public school districts shall utilize these funds in accordance with the requirements of Section 59-18-500 of the 1976 Code. The State Department of Education is directed to utilize PACT-like tests aligned with standards to be administered to students on academic probation required to attend summer school. The test shall be a determinate in judging whether the student has the skills to succeed at the next grade level. The State Board of Education shall establish regulations to define the extenuating circumstances including death of an immediate family member or severe long-term student illness, under which the requirements of Section 59-18-900(D) may be waived. Furthermore, the Department of Education, working with and through the SC After school Alliance, will provide \$250,000 to produce a model of voluntary quality standards for out-of-school time programs, develop a directory of technical assistance, and identify gaps of service.¹

¹ 2007-2008 State General Appropriations Act

Guidelines for Academic Plans for Students²

I. Intent of Guidelines

The purpose of this provision is to add one component to the many strategies that are to be combined by the districts to meet the intent of the Education Accountability Act (EAA) to improve teaching and learning so that students are equipped with a strong academic foundation.

The EAA requires that schools must develop individual Academic Plans for Students (APSS) for those students in grades three through eight who do not meet grade level³. The intent in requiring the development of APSS for students not currently at grade level is to provide these students with the tools and assistance they need in order to achieve at or above grade level. Schools, parents, and students must work together to accomplish this goal.

II. District Responsibilities

A. Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-500 (Supp. 1999), beginning in the 1998–99 school year and annually thereafter, schools must begin developing Academic Plans for Students for those students lacking the skills to perform at current grade levels. The school must notify the parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or the legal guardian(s) of students in grades three through eight of the need for a conference if the student lacks the skills to perform at his or her current grade level.

B. Districts must review policies regarding academic conferences, Academic Plans for Students, and district-level reviews to ensure compliance with the EAA and with these guidelines and must give a copy of these policies to every student and his or her parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s).

C. Students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and qualify for Academic Plans for Students may have their APS conference during their annual IEP meeting. However, if the student receives services only for speech and is

² Approved by the State Board of Education on November 14, 2001

³ Students who lack the skills to perform at grade level

eligible for an APS, the school conference participants should develop the APS.

If a student with a disability who is receiving special education and related services is below grade level, the IEP team and appropriate school personnel as needed must review the student's IEP. This review team will determine whether bringing the student to grade level is consistent with the goals and objectives in the student's IEP. If this is the case, a determination must be made as to whether the existing IEP adequately addresses the necessary academic assistance to bring the student to grade level. If it does not, then the review team must develop an APS, which can either be a separate document or a part of the student's IEP. Whether the APS is an incorporated or stand-alone document should be addressed as part of the district guidelines.

Policies and procedures established by districts regarding academic conferences, Academic Plans for Students, district-level reviews, and the appeals process must be consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its accompanying regulations.

D. Students with limited English proficiency who are not on grade level are eligible for APSs. An APS may be used to meet both the academic and language needs of a limited-English-proficient student. However, a limited-English-proficient student may not be retained due to his or her limited language proficiency.

E. Districts must monitor the implementation of APSs as part of the local accountability plan and may use Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act of 1993 (Act 135) funds to carry out APSs, including using funds to support summer school attendance.

III. Beginning of School Year Plan

A. Identification of Students

Districts must set policies regarding the use of assessment results, schoolwork, and teacher judgment to identify those students in grades three through eight who are eligible for

Academic Plans for Students. At a minimum, a student must receive an APS if the student meets one of the following criteria:

1. The student was retained for the current school year for academic reasons.
2. The student did not score at the basic performance level on any test in the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) battery.
3. The student transferred from another school and has an APS or meets either of the above two requirements to qualify for an APS.

If a student with an APS transfers from one South Carolina school district to another within an academic year, the originating school must transfer the APS with the student's academic record. Within ten days of receiving the academic records, the receiving district will schedule a conference with appropriate participants to review the APS and determine the necessary provisions to address the academic needs of the student.

B. Conference

1. Once a student is identified as eligible for an APS, the school must notify the parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) of the need for a conference. Notification must be made and documented at least ten days prior to the conference date. Schools must follow up if a response is not received prior to the conference date. This conference must take place at the beginning of the school year and should occur within the first thirty days of school.
2. The student, parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s), and the appropriate school personnel (as determined by the school) will participate in this conference. The purpose of this conference is to address the area(s) of academic difficulty and to identify measures to assist the student in performing at or above grade level. Conference participants must also take into consideration any accommodations plan as provided for under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, limited-English-proficiency plan, student transition plan, and student

career plan, if applicable, that have been developed for the student.

C. Academic Plan

1. During the conference, a written academic plan will be developed by conference participants that includes additional services to be provided by the school and/or district and specifies the actions the student and parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) will undertake. The APS should identify specific areas of weakness and state the objectives of the plan. Schools shall provide for a method of evaluating the student's progress throughout the school year (at least once each grading period).

Additional services include but are not limited to:

- a) extended day/weekend programs (e.g., homework centers),
- b) reduction in pupil-teacher ratio,
- c) teachers assigned to more than one class for targeted assistance,
- d) additional classes,
- e) tutoring,
- f) additional study aids/tools,
- g) focused study in a particular area,
- h) peer tutoring,
- i) intense targeted academic assistance,
- j) labs,
- k) summer school,
- l) individual assistance,

- m) computer assisted instruction,
- n) on grade instruction, and
- o) volunteer assistance.

Examples of actions taken by parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) include

- a) monitoring their child's school/academic progress,
- b) responding to teachers' and school's requests,
- c) providing homework assistance to students,
- d) attending conferences and open houses,
- e) encouraging and expecting good behavior from students,
- f) having high expectations for academic performance, and
- g) volunteering at the school.

Examples of actions taken by students include

- a) behaving appropriately,
- b) improving attendance, reduce tardiness,
- c) increasing classroom participation, and
- d) completing homework.

2. Conference participants must sign the APS. If a parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) refuses to sign the APS, the school should document the refusal.
3. The parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) must be given a copy of the APS.

D. Failure of Parent(s), Surrogate Parent(s), or Legal Guardian(s) to Attend Conference

The school must appoint a school mentor (teacher or adult volunteer) to work with the student and to advocate for services for the student, if the parent(s) surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) fails to attend the conference. If the district's policy provides for adult volunteers, the district should develop a selection process that includes, but is not limited to, agreements related to confidentiality and background checks. The mentor's role should be to represent the academic interests of the student at the initial conference. The school must make reasonable efforts to schedule the conference at a time convenient to the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Only after those attempts have been made and documented should a mentor be assigned. For a student with a disability, the IEP team shall function as the mentor.

A copy of the APS developed with a school mentor must be sent to the parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) by certified mail.

E. Maintenance of Records

A copy of the APS, the conference notification letter(s), and other documentation should be maintained in the student's permanent record.

IV. End of Summer School Review (Summer School and Comprehensive Remediation)

E. School Review of Progress

1. Review by School Personnel

At the end of the school year, appropriate school personnel (as determined by the school) must review the progress of

each student who has an APS. It is recommended that the school personnel who participated in the development of the APS take part in the end-of-the year review. The determination of whether a student is at grade level should be based on the student's class performance and teacher evaluation as well as other relevant factors.

2. Student's Progress

If the student's work is not at grade level or if the terms of the APS have not been met, the student may be retained or, as a condition of promotion to the next grade, may be required to attend summer school or a comprehensive remediation program the following year. Students attending either summer school or a comprehensive remediation program pursuant to this section will do so without charge.

a) Summer school programs for academic assistance may be structured both in the number of hours in the school day and in the number of school days to accommodate individual academic needs. At a minimum, EAA summer school must be no less than thirty instructional hours and meet this and all other requirements of Regulation 43-240, Summer Program. Classes offered in summer school programs must be taught with the same rigor and in accordance with the same standards as required during the regular school year. Students must have sufficient time to receive instruction in each area of academic deficiency.

Providing extended school year services for a student with a disability does not relieve the school district of the responsibility of providing summer school services, as deemed necessary, under the same guidelines that apply to students without disabilities.

b) Comprehensive remediation programs for academic assistance may be structured both in the number of hours in the school day and in the number of school days to address the objectives outlined in each student's APS. Classes offered in comprehensive remediation programs must be taught with the same rigor and in accordance with

the same standards as required during the regular school year. Programs must adhere to all State Board of Education regulations that would apply if the instruction took place during the normal school day.

Comprehensive remediation programs must include a system for communication between the regular classroom teacher and the CR teacher in order to address the areas in need of remediation and assess the student's progress. Comprehensive remediation programs must operate outside of the normal school day of six hours per day or thirty hours per week as specified in the State Board of Education's Defined Program and/or in the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Sufficient time must be allotted for students to receive instruction in each area of academic deficiency. Comprehensive remediation programs must be year-long, beginning as soon as possible, but not later than the end of the first grading period, and concluding no sooner than thirty calendar days prior to the last day of school for students.

Academic assistance provided through comprehensive remediation programs cannot supplant academic assistance provided to the student during the normal school day or other academic assistance outlined in the student's APS.

c) If, in the end of the year review, a student is considered at grade level under the provision of this section, but the PACT data later show the student is not at the basic performance level, the school must require that the student be given a revised APS for the next school year. The student will not be considered to be on probation.

F. Right to Appeal

The parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) may appeal the following decisions to the district review panel:

1. student retention,

2. mandatory summer school attendance, and
3. mandatory attendance in a comprehensive remediation program.

The review panel (the composition of which is to be determined by the district) should consider compelling reasons for not retaining a student, not requiring the student to attend summer school, or not requiring the student to attend a comprehensive remediation program.

V. Retention

G. District Panel Review

At the end of the summer session, a district panel (the composition of which is to be determined by the district) must review the academic progress of students who attended summer school. The panel must report to the parent(s), surrogate parent(s), legal guardian(s), in writing, the student's academic progress.

H. Academic Probation

If the student is not at grade level, or the student's assessment results show that the standards have not been met, he or she must be placed on academic probation. For a student with a disability, the IEP team shall make the decision as to how the probation and retention policies are applied.

If, at the end-of-summer-school review, a student is considered at grade level under the provision of this section but the PACT data later show the student is not at the basic performance level, the school must require that the student be given a revised APS for the school year. The student will not be considered to be on probation.

This guideline does not limit the ability of a district to consider factors other than PACT data in placing a student with an APS on probationary status.

Students already on academic probation who are required to attend summer session, must be administered an end of summer assessment. Test items used on end-of-summer

assessments must be aligned with state standards reflected on PACT. The test shall be a determinate in judging whether the student has the skills to succeed at the next grade level.

I. Conference

If a student is placed on academic probation, a conference among the student, parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s), and the appropriate school personnel (as determined by the school) must be held to revise the APS. This conference should take place following summer school. Districts must carry out the same requirements for notice, participants, and assignment of mentors as described in section III, items B and D.

The conference participants must stipulate in writing in the revised APS that the student will be retained if his or her schoolwork is not up to grade level or if assessment results again show standards are not being met.

VI. Reporting of Data

J. Retention after Probationary Year

If a student does not meet the standards after the probationary year, the student must be retained. The school must make an effort to meet with the parent(s), surrogate parent(s), or legal guardian(s) to discuss the student's academic progress and the determination of the need to retain. For a student with a disability, the IEP team shall make the decision as to how the probation and retention policies are applied.

If, after the probationary year, the student is still not performing at grade level and the student is retained, the school must call another conference and review and/or revise the APS.

If after the retention year the student is not performing at grade level, an APS must be developed for the following school year. (See above, section III, item A, 1, and section IV.)

K. Retention after Failure to Improve*

A third failure in the same PACT area requires retention unless the student successfully completes the end of summer assessment. In the case of extenuating circumstances the school district may waive this requirement. Extenuating circumstances are limited to the death or severe long-term illness of an immediate family member or the severe long-term illness of the student.

Districts should identify students who have already failed PACT two or more times. Since these students are in danger of mandatory retention if they do not score at grade level on the spring PACT administration, districts should give these students the opportunity to attend summer school. They should also be allowed to take the end of summer assessment. A student shall not be required to attend summer school to take part in the end of summer assessment if the student was in a comprehensive remediation program the prior year.

Students enrolled in schools rated unsatisfactory may remain on probation rather than being retained unless they have a third failure in both areas of PACT. In that case the student must successfully complete the end of summer assessment for both areas.

L. District Appeals Process

The district's appeals process remains in effect.

VII. End-of-the School Year Review

Districts must provide annual reports on students with APSs at each grade level to the State Department of Education by November 15. The report must include

M. the number of students who had APSs developed,

N. the number of students on APSs who were retained,

* The provision for mandatory retention after three failures on PACT regardless of other circumstances is obsolete as of June 2002.

O. the number of students on APSs who were promoted at grade level without summer school or year-long comprehensive remediation,

P. the number of students on APSs who were required to attend summer school,

Q. the number of students on APSs who were required to attend year-long comprehensive remediation,

R. the number of students on APSs who attended summer school and were promoted without consequence at grade level,

S. the number of students on APSs who attended required summer school and who were promoted on academic probation with revised APSs,

T. the number of students on APSs who attended year-long comprehensive remediation and were promoted at grade level (beginning November 15, 2000),

U. the number of students on APS probation (beginning November 15, 2000),

V. the number of students retained after being on APS probation (beginning November 15, 2000), and

W. the number of students removed from APS probation and promoted at grade level (beginning November 15, 2000).

These data must be disaggregated by gender, race, free and reduced price lunch, and students on IEPs.

SECTION 2

Basic Requirements and Reminders

Basic Requirements

- I. Identify students in need of an Academic Plan for Students (APS): All students who have scored below basic on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), who are in a retention year, or who failed language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies are required to have an APS. Identify any other students who are not performing at grade level (using teacher judgment, class work, and other assessments). All students in grades three through eight not working at grade level must have an APS.
- II. Schedule a conference with the parent and student and appropriate school personnel to develop a plan to bring the student to grade level.
- III. Monitor the students' progress regularly and no less than once each grading period. Notify parents of concerns as they arise.
- IV. The end-of-year review: An evaluation of the student's progress must be made at the end of the academic year with or without PACT scores. The evaluation cannot be based solely on PACT scores. At the end-of-year review, you must decide if the student is (A) at grade level or (B) not at grade level, and notify parents of the end-of-year decision. You must also notify the student and parents at this time if the student will attend summer school on probation or if the student will be on probation in the next school year. These decisions can be appealed, and you must have a district panel in place to review any appeals.
 - A. Students at grade level are promoted with no further consequences. If a student were required to have an APS in the future, it would be a new APS.
 - B. Students not at grade level (an end-of-year conference should be attempted for these students) must be either (i) retained, (ii) required to go to summer school, or (iii) required to attend comprehensive remediation (CR) the following year on probation. You do not have to offer students both summer school and comprehensive remediation.

1. Students in a retention year must have an APS.
2. Students attending summer school after only one year on an APS may be promoted on probation. Students attending summer school after the second consecutive year on an APS will attend summer school on probation and take the district's end-of-summer assessment. Assessment results will be a factor in deciding if the student is promoted on grade level or retained. These are the only options.
3. Districts may require year one APS students to attend programs that meet the requirements of CR at their discretion. However, these students will be coded as receiving general academic assistance (GAA) in order to maintain the distinction between students who are on probation and those who are not. Also, districts must be able to show that students on probation are receiving both general academic assistance and either summer school or comprehensive remediation. Services for first year APS students and students on probation cannot be identical.
4. At the end of year one, students not at grade level who are required to attend CR are notified at that time of their probationary status and its consequences. At the end of the probationary year, the end-of-year review will determine whether the student is promoted on grade level or retained. These are the only options.

Science and Social Studies

All students scoring below basic on any subject area of PACT must have an APS. Additionally, districts will set guidelines based on classroom achievement and teacher judgment to identify students in need of an APS who were either not tested in a particular subject area or who scored at the basic level on the PACT yet still need extra help to maintain performance levels.

Schools and districts will follow all APS provisions in end-of-year reviews and end-of-summer school reviews. Districts may require more stringent promotion and retention policies with the approval of the local board.

If a student has an APS in three or four subject areas, then remediation in English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics will be emphasized. Science and/or social studies remediation must be included by integrating the content into the allotted ELA or math remediation time. In this case, the class instructor does not have to be certified in science or social studies, but the district will have a person certified in science or social studies collaborate with the primary teacher in designing curriculum for the integrated remediation program.

Students with IEPs

In the case of all students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 which reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the IEP team must make the decision as to how promotion and retention policies (including summer school and probation) are applied.

Federal IDEA regulations give IEP teams the authority to make decisions regarding how promotion and retention policies will be applied to students with disabilities in special education programs. The U.S. Department of Education has made it clear that this is the responsibility of IEP teams.

If a student with an IEP scores below basic on PACT—regardless of whether the student tests on grade level or with an alternate performance assessment, the IEP team must meet to decide if it is in the student's best interest to attend extended day programs, weekend programs, extended year programs (including summer school); to be placed on probation; or to be retained. If it is consistent with the goals

and objectives in the student's IEP to be brought to grade level and the current IEP does not provide sufficient support, then the student must have an APS.

Legal References: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 which reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Guidelines for Academic Plans for Students (Approved by the State Board of Education, November 14, 2001) Sections II, C; III, D; V, B; and VI, A.

Other Areas of Concern

Definition of "below basic" and "below grade level." Under law, schools are required to develop an APS for "each student in grades three through eight who lacks the skills to perform at grade level based on assessment results, school work, or teacher judgment." Once a student has an APS, the goal is to help the student achieve at grade level. Reviews and interventions should be verbalized in these terms.

Objective of the appeals process. When a parent appeals the school's decision to require a student to attend summer school or comprehensive remediation or to be placed on probation or retained, the parent is actually contesting the determination that the student is not at grade level.

Therefore, the question that the appeals panel will answer will always be the same: "Is this student at grade level?" If the answer is no, the appeal is denied absent extenuating circumstances.

Continuous improvement. Districts should work with their schools on an on-going basis to collect data, evaluate, and improve academic interventions. Curriculum leaders should ensure that schools have access to a variety of interventions. APS conference participants must choose interventions that best serve the objectives outlined in the APS.

Districts should monitor and aggressively seek to reduce instances where PACT data, students' progress reports, and APS determinations are not aligned. Districts should handle these promotion and retention decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Probation and summer school or comprehensive remediation. Any student not attaining grade level at the end of the first year of an APS must be required to attend comprehensive remediation on

probation or summer school. If the student attends summer school after the first year of an APS, probation is not required. If a student is required to attend summer school after the second year of an APS, the student is on probation and must take the end-of-summer assessment.

Supplemental Education Services (SES). If a school is required to offer SES, the SES may be able to serve as the CR. The SES must meet all regulatory requirements of CR (e.g., qualify as additional classroom instruction in the subject area in which the student needs CR and be taught by a teacher certified in that area).

Charter Schools. Although, they are required to address in their charter how they are going to provide assistance to students, charter schools do not have to follow the EAA requirements for APSs since they are exempt from most state laws and regulations.

Districts will not be allocated summer school/comprehensive remediation funds for the below basic scores at the charter schools within their districts unless the charter school opts to have APSs and provides remediation and/or summer school. In that case the charter school would be expected to follow all state guidelines and funding requirements as regular public schools.

DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

I. District Board of Trustees

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-500, each district board of trustees will establish a standardized district APS procedure.

This procedure must include, at a minimum, the method of

- A. identifying students in need of an APS,
- B. conducting conferences,
- C. administering the district-level-review process, and
- D. administering the appeals process.

II. Training

The EAA requires all districts to monitor the implementation of APSs. For an effective program that runs smoothly, districts should conduct regular training that keeps teachers and staff informed of state requirements and any additional district requirements. The SDE has developed a PowerPoint presentation that can be adapted for use in your district training. You can download the presentation for editing and presenting by going through the APS link on the Office of School Quality page at www.myschools.com/offices/sq.

III. Monitoring

In 2004–05, the Office of Internal Auditing (OIA) conducted a review of the APS process in several schools and districts. One of the key findings of the OIA was that schools in districts that had central leadership, an APS coordinator, were far more likely to be in compliance with state regulations and to use the APS as an effective instructional tool. The OIA review resulted in the following actions and recommendations to school districts:

- Finding: Schools cited problems with receiving PACT data late in the school year or with the lack of diagnostic information available from PACT. The majority of schools are waiting until fall PACT data arrives before beginning that year's APS process.

- Response: All districts should direct schools to use the below-basic PACT rosters released in the summer, prior year APSs, and the identification of retained students to begin the APS process as early as possible and to complete the APS conference and plan within the first thirty days of school as required by State Board of Education (SBE) Guidelines. (See APS Guidelines, Section III.B.1.)
- Finding: Some schools are not concerned with documentation as long as they ensure that students are receiving services.
 - Response: This is not acceptable because the documentation is clearly required in the Education Accountability Act (EAA). The SDE will take a more proactive role in ensuring this documentation by requiring district confirmation that such documentation exists.
- Finding: Some schools have established time frames or a date to have APSs completed, but many have not or have set them too late. The OCS should provide guidance to schools regarding deadlines.
 - Response: The SDE will develop a clear timeline identifying all deadlines highlighting these deadlines outside of the published Guidelines for Academic Plans for Students. The SDE will instruct district coordinators in setting up district-specific calendars to identify these deadlines in the end-of-year training (see RESOURCES).
- Finding: The district policy does not have established timelines for attempting to hold a parent conference before assigning a mentor.
 - Response: Districts and schools should establish requirements for the number of attempts to hold a parent conference before assigning a mentor in order to ensure equitable treatment of students and parents. Deadlines for parent contact and assigning mentors must fall within the parameters set out in the SDE timeline calendar for APSs.
- Finding: Schools are required to assign a mentor for a student if the parent conference cannot be arranged after several documented attempts. In this case a copy of the student's APS must be sent to the parents by certified mail. Schools voiced

concerns that the cost of this mailing could be high and problems with the certified mail being returned.

- ❑ Response: Schools are required by the EAA to send parents a copy of the APS by certified mail when a mentor is assigned. If certified mail is returned, the school will keep appropriate documentation to verify that the certified mail delivery was attempted.
- Finding: Some schools are falling short on providing adequate general academic assistance by only offering homework help and assignment sign-off as their main assistance efforts.
 - ❑ Response: The SDE will emphasize to districts the necessity of providing general academic assistance targeted to a student's areas of weakness and that addresses the goals of the APS.
- Finding: Schools need to ensure that if they are not offering summer school to second-year APS students, then they are offering comprehensive remediation that meets the requirements set forth in the Guidelines for Academic Assistance.
 - Some programs are not yearlong as required by law.
 - Some first-year and second-year students are being offered the same services.
 - Some schools use comprehensive remediation to supplant rather than supplement general academic assistance as required by law.
 - ❑ Response: New data collection procedures should provide us with the information necessary to monitor this set of problems.
- Finding: Some schools use interim and/or quarterly reports as the only review of a student's progress on an APS. These reports are standard for every student in most every school and are not a separate review of APS progress.
 - ❑ Response: The SDE will clarify the necessity of reporting progress specifically on the APS and its goals as a separate category if the reporting is done on report cards.

- Finding: The identification of students as first-year or second-year students creates some confusion.
 - If a student was on an APS for his first year, fulfills the goals of the APS in the same academic year, and gets placed on an APS the next school year, is this considered the first or second year?
 - What if the student is on an APS for two or more years, but for different subjects each year?
 - What if at the end of the second year of being on an APS, a student must be on a plan the following (third) year? How should they be classified and what types of assistance should we be offering?
 - Response: The SDE will continue to address these issues in regular training and provide visual representations (see RESOURCES) of the APS process.
 - Once a student is retained or promoted at grade level, the next APS that the student receives is a first year APS.
 - Only students on APS for the second consecutive year in the same subject area will be put on probation.
 - If a student is still below grade level after the second year of an APS, which should be a probation year, the student should be retained.
- Finding: Some schools are offering no academic assistance for students who are below grade level in science and social studies or only offer this assistance if the student is on an APS for math or language arts.
 - Response: New data collection procedures should give us the information necessary to monitor districts and ensure that all are offering the required academic assistance.

IV. Monitoring Checklist

To make sure that these problems or others do not exist at your district and school, district APS coordinators should also conduct

random reviews or internal audits to maintain the integrity of the APS process.

This might include using a checklist similar to this one:

A. District Procedures for Academic Plans for Students. Districts are required by Section 59-18-500 of the Education Accountability Act to disseminate a District Promotion and Retention Policy that is consistent with state APS requirements. The district's standard procedures must be given to all parents of students in grades three through eight and should include

1. the criteria used to identify students, including third graders and transfer students, for an APS,
2. specific intervention programs offered in the district,
3. identification of programs, if any, that meet the requirements of comprehensive remediation,
4. directions for submitting an appeal,
5. designated members of the appeals panel,
6. a description of the end-of-summer assessment required to be given to all students attending summer school on probation (if summer school is offered), and
7. district requirements for promotion and retention.

B. Procedures established by districts and local boards regarding academic conferences, district-level reviews, and the appeals process are consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its accompanying regulations.

C. The district monitors the implementation of APSs as part of the local accountability plan.

D. The district APS procedure is distributed to all parents/guardians of students in grades three through eight.

E. Faculty and appropriate staff are well informed of district policy and APS procedures.

F. Consider conducting brief interviews such as this one:

1. Can all faculty and staff working with students with APSs answer these questions?
2. What or where is the district APS procedure?
3. How and when do you send copies of the district procedure to all parents of students in grades three through eight?
4. How are students identified for an APS?
5. What process is in place to help teachers efficiently schedule conferences?
6. Does the format for developing APSs (form, etc.) require teachers to identify specific areas of weakness and goals?
7. Do you require teachers to make extensive comments at the end of the year if the student is required to have a revised APS?
8. What is done to make sure that all required APSs are completed?
9. What process do you use to monitor APSs each grading period?
10. How do you notify parents of progress?
11. What is the process for conducting end-of-year reviews?

- a) Required summer school?
- b) Comprehensive remediation?
- c) Probation?
- d) Retention?

G. Schools give adequate notice to parents/guardians of the need for a conference if the student lacks the skills to perform at his or her current grade level.

H. Schools include students along with parents and appropriate school personnel in the APS conference.

I. A student with limited English proficiency (LEP) who is not on grade level is eligible for an individual APS. The plan may be used to meet both the academic and language needs of a limited-English-proficient student; however, such a student may not be retained due to his or her limited language proficiency.

J. APSs are monitored each grading period, and there is a method for notifying parents of ongoing progress.

K. Students not meeting grade level standards at the end of their first APS year are notified—at that time—that they will be on academic probation in their second APS year.

L. Students not meeting grade level standards at the end of their second APS year (or second APS summer school if applicable) are notified—at that time—that they will be retained.

M. All second year APS students are required to attend summer school or a comprehensive remediation program.

N. The summer school or comprehensive remediation program meets the EAA requirements.

O. The school/district maintains accurate and complete records of APSs in students' permanent records.

P. The school completes the Student Supplemental Atom information for SASI in a timely manner.

Q. The school/district transfers the APS when a student transfers and makes sure to obtain a copy of the APS of students transferring from other South Carolina schools.

SECTION 3

SASI Data Collection

In order to simplify the collection of data required by the EAA and the SBE, we use the SASI system. You must complete three categories of data for each of the four subject areas covered by PACT. For each subject, language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies, you will enter data for every student with an APS into these SASI fields. The instructions for completing the APS fields in SASI are in the Curriculum and Standards User Manual maintained by the Office of District Technology Services:

<http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/tech/dts/ManualsforSCAtoms.html>.

Throughout the year, please use only codes that are consistent with the SASI codes in order to ensure the accuracy of your data from the teacher to you to the SASI clerk to the State Department of Education. The fields are categorized as status, consequence (end-of-year decision), and summer school consequence. You must complete each category for each subject area as it pertains to that subject area only. Following is a picture of the screen where you will enter APS data. The screen shot is followed by a description of each field that you must complete specifically for APS. Please note, however, that as the data is collected, we will also extract all demographic information for students as well as disability status. So please be sure these fields are completed in the student atom. Each description is headed the same as the SASI fields are labeled:

The screenshot shows a web-based data entry form titled "SC Curriculum & Standards Data Entry". The form contains several sections for data entry:

- Student Information:** Last Name, First Name, Middle Name, Grd, Gen, Student ID.
- Title 1 Performance:** Title 1 Reading, Title 1 Reading Performance, Title 1 Math, Title 1 Math Performance, Title 1 Assist.
- Gifted & Talented:** Gifted & Talented Refer, Gifted & Talented Refer By, Gifted & Talented Model, Gifted & Talented Date.
- Acad Plan Status:** Acad Plan Stat Lang Arts, Acad Plan Stat Math, Acad Plan Stat Science, Acad Plan Stat Soc Studies.
- Acad Plan Consequence:** Acad Plan Con Lang Arts, Acad Plan Con Math, Acad Plan Con Science, Acad Plan Con Soc Studies.
- Summer School Consequence:** SmmrSchl Con Lang Arts, SmmrSchl Con Math, SmmrSchl Con Science, SmmrSchl Con Soc Studies.
- IB Diploma:** IB Diploma, AtomDate.

Each section contains a dropdown menu with a code (e.g., XTP, XTA, XGR, XGT, XAR, XAS) and a button to select a value. At the bottom, there are navigation buttons (back, search, forward) and "Close" and "Find" buttons.

I. General Program Reminders for Academic Plan fields:

A. Academic plans are designed to help students in grades 3–8 function on grade level. They are implemented on a two-year cycle, which begins once the student has been identified as needing an academic plan. More details concerning academic plans can be found at the following site: <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/SQ/AcademicPlans/>

B. Students not on probation are in their first-year cycle with an academic plan. If students are promoted with no plan at the end of the school year, then the academic plan cycle ends.

C. Students will begin the first-year cycle again if assessment results warrant it.

D. If first-year students remain on a continuous academic plan, they enter the second year of the two-year cycle on probation.

E. Students on probation are in their second and continuous year with an academic plan.

F. If students on probation are retained at the end of the school year, they need revised academic plans, but the two-year cycle starts over. That is, consider retained students as first-year cycle students not on probation.

II. SASI Timeline Reminders

A. 4th QDC SASI Deadline (All students' APS end-of year data for all subject areas must be entered into SASI atoms.)

B. 1st QDC SASI Deadline (Deadline to enter Summer School data for all subject areas into previous school year's SASI atoms. Deadline to enter all students' APS statuses for all subject areas into current school year's SASI atoms.)

III. Academic Plan Status Options

The status field indicates the current stage of the APS two-year cycle and what category of academic assistance students are receiving for the current academic year. Select from the drop-down menu as it applies to this subject only.

CP = Comprehensive Remediation on Probation [Comprehensive Remediation on probation (CP) is the status option that refers to an additional layer of academic assistance for students who are entering their second year of the two-year cycle (consecutive and continuous) of an APS in the same subject area. Schools must provide students on probation with assistance that is beyond what is provided to first year cycle APS students. Comprehensive remediation must be delivered outside the normal school day.]

O = General Academic Assistance [General Academic Assistance is the status option for first-year cycle students who receive general academic assistance. If a school provides a program that meets the requirements of comprehensive remediation to these students, enter the status option as "O". It is important for the SDE to determine which students are not on probation.]

OP = General Academic Assistance on Probation [General Academic Assistance on Probation is the status option for students who will receive general academic assistance after going to a first-year cycle summer school session. If a school provides a program during the school year that meets the requirements of comprehensive remediation to these students, then a school may enter the status option as "CP." It is important for the SDE to determine which students are on probation.]

IV. Academic Plan End-of-School Year Consequence Options

The consequence field indicates the end-of-school year decision for a student. This information and the student's APS must be available to the student's new APS team at the beginning of the new school year. Select from the drop-down menu as it applies to this subject only.

CP = Comprehensive Remediation on Probation [This consequence option applies to students who will become second-year cycle probationary students. These students will receive comprehensive remediation outside the school day during the school year.]

N = No plan for this subject area [This consequence option applies to students determined to possess the skills necessary to perform on grade level for this subject area even if the student has not met grade level standards for other subject areas.]

Assigning a subject area with the consequence "N" does not exclude the retention consequence from being assigned for other subject areas.]

R = Retained [This consequence option is considered for second-year cycle probationary students determined to be retained at grade level for performance in this specific subject area. Assigning a subject area with the consequence "R" does not necessarily exclude the "N" or "R" consequence options from being assigned for other subject areas. Recording this information is important in order to track the specific subject area(s) causing the retention.]

SP = Summer School on Probation [This consequence option is considered for second-year cycle probationary students who still lack the skills to perform on grade level at the end of the school year. Students attending summer school on probation must take the district's end-of-summer assessment. These assessment results will factor in the decision of whether the student is promoted or retained.]

SS = Summer School [This consequence option is considered only for first-year cycle APS students and applies to students who were determined at the end of the school year to lack the skills to perform at grade level in a subject area. Schools have the option to offer first year summer school or comprehensive remediation or both during the upcoming school year.]

V. Summer School Consequence Options

This field indicates the end-of-summer school decision for a student. This information and the student's APS must be available to the student's new APS team at the beginning of the new school year. Select from the drop-down menu as it applies to this subject only.

CP = Comprehensive Remediation on Probation [This consequence option applies to students who will become second-year cycle probationary students. These students will receive comprehensive remediation outside the school day during the school year.]

N = No plan for this subject area [This consequence option applies to students determined to possess the skills necessary to perform on grade level for this subject area even if the student

has not met grade level standards for other subject areas. Assigning a subject area with the consequence "N" does not exclude the retention consequence from being assigned for other subject areas.]

OP = General Academic Assistance on Probation [This consequence option applies to students who will become second-year cycle probationary students. These students attended a first-year cycle summer school program and continued to lack the skills to perform on grade level.]

R = Retained [This consequence option is considered for second-year cycle probationary students determined to be retained at grade level for performance in this specific subject area. Assigning a subject area with the consequence "R" does not necessarily exclude the "N" or "R" consequence options from being assigned for other subject areas. Recording this information is important in order to track the specific subject area(s) causing the retention.]

Section 4

Resources

I. Academic Plans for Students

A. If you have questions or concerns about APS requirements and procedures, please contact the program coordinator at:

Office of Federal and State Accountability
Tim Conroy, Education Associate
Room 701-C, Rutledge Building
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
Phone: 803-734-3131
Fax: 803-734-8701
tconroy@ed.sc.gov

B. Training PowerPoint

The training PowerPoint can be downloaded from the SDE's former Office of School Quality's website at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/SQ/AcademicPlans/> so that you can adapt it for your district's use. Be sure to save the presentation locally as a new PowerPoint before you begin your edits.

II. PACT/Assessment Issues

For questions directly related to PACT and its administration, please go to the Office of Assessment site at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/assessment/> or contact

Office of Assessment
Susan Creighton
Education Associate
Room B-14, Rutledge Building
Phone: 803-734-8535
Fax: 803-734-8886
screight@ed.sc.gov

III. SASI/Technology Issues

For questions directly related to the SASI system and its administration, please go to the Office of Technology site at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/tech/dts/ManualsforSCAtoms.html> or contact

Office of District Technology Services
Leon Nelson
Team Supervisor
803-734-8826
lnelson@ed.sc.gov

IV. Funding

Districts may use a variety of funding sources to meet the requirements of the APS. The state allocates funds to districts to help meet the requirement of providing summer school or comprehensive remediation to students at no cost. The Office of Finance maintains up-to-date guidelines for the use of this allocation in its Funding Manual at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/finance/manuals/> then click on Manuals-District Auditing/Finance at the top of the page.

For questions directly related to funding and Revenue Code 3121, Sub-fund 231/232, please check the Funding Manual or contact

Office of Finance
Mellanie Jinnette
Room 303-B, Rutledge Building
Phone: 803-734-3605
Fax: 803-734-8574
mjinnett@ed.sc.gov

V. Promotion and Retention Policies

For assistance in revising district promotion and retention policies to be in compliance with state laws and support the APS process, please contact

South Carolina School Boards Association (SCSBA)

Pat Kinsey, Director of Policy Services

Phone: 800-326-3679

Fax: 803-779-0455

pkinsey@scsba.org

<http://www.scsba.org/index.html>

The following documents can be accessed for local use. Please follow the previous directions for downloading the training PowerPoint to download and edit these documents.



APPENDIX A

ACADEMIC PLANS FOR STUDENTS INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN GRADES 3–8

If your child does not score at the basic level or higher on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), your school is required by state law to develop an Academic Plan for Students (APS). Additionally, state law requires that every student in a retention year have an APS. A local district may also have other criteria to identify students in need of an APS.

The APS will be developed in a conference at the beginning of the school year after your child scores below basic. You, your child, and school personnel will participate in the conference to identify problem areas and agree upon strategies to help your child overcome these problems during the school year. The APS agreement will require action and commitment from you, your child, and the school.

Your child's progress on the APS must be assessed every grading period, and you should be notified of any problems or concerns. At the end of the school year, your child's APS team will decide if he now has the skills to perform at grade level or if more intensive help is needed. If the school judges your student to be at grade level and he scores below basic on PACT in the same subject area at any time in the future, the school will schedule a conference to develop a new APS.

If your child is not performing at grade level by the end-of-the-year review, he must attend summer school and/or a year-long comprehensive remediation program as part of the on-going APS. This will be in addition to any other general academic assistance in the APS.

If your child is required to have an APS for a second academic year, you will be notified that he is on probation. At the end of the probation year, your child will be retained if the school's end-of-the-year review shows that he is still not performing at grade level.

As a parent, you have the right to appeal end-of-the-year decisions. However, your child will be required to attend summer school, comprehensive remediation, or be retained if his record cannot prove an ability to perform at grade level.

Responsibilities of Participants

The school

1. schedules a beginning-of-the-year conference to develop the APS,
2. provides general academic assistance in year one (comprehensive remediation or summer school in year two),
3. monitors and updates the student's APS, and
4. makes an end-of-year decision based on all available information including test scores, grades, and teacher judgment.

The parent

1. works with the school to schedule the beginning-of-the-year conference,
2. actively participates in the conference to decide the best course of action to help the student meet his academic goals,
3. follows through on parent interventions such as monitoring homework time or listening to the child read at home, and
4. supports the child in meeting his commitment to the APS.

The child

1. participates in the beginning-of-the-year conference,
2. asks for help when needed, and
3. keeps his commitment to student interventions such as attending all classes and turning in all homework.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT
YOUR SCHOOL OR LOCAL DISTRICT OFFICE:

**Insert District Office Information
Here**

APPENDIX B
Academic Plans for Students
School Year Timeline

Summer

Schools use below-basic PACT rosters, prior year APS end-of-year evaluation, and retained students' rosters to plan for beginning-of-the-year APS conferences.

1st Day of School/Students Return to School

Attempt to contact parents. Parents must be contacted at least ten days prior to the proposed conference date. The school must follow up if the parent does not respond prior to the conference date.

20th Day of School

Assign mentors and schedule conferences for students whose parents refuse to comply. Send a copy of the completed APS signed by the school official, the mentor, and the student to the parent by certified mail.

30th Day of School

The school has held all APS conferences and developed an APS for each student performing below grade level.

All APS students are receiving general academic assistance (GAA).

45th Day of School/First Quarterly Data Collection (QDC)

Deadline to enter Summer School Consequence data for all subject areas into previous school year's SASI atoms.

Deadline to enter all students' APS status for all subject areas into current school year's SASI atoms.

End of First Grading Period

Students in the second consecutive year of an APS in the same subject area, the definition of APS probation, are receiving yearlong comprehensive remediation (CR) in addition to GAA.

Each Grading Period

The school reviews the students' progress on the APS each grading period and updates parents. The report card cannot serve as the only notification to parents unless there is a section on the report card to specifically address the APS.

Transfer Students: Within ten days of receiving the academic records, the school must schedule a conference for transfer students who need an APS.

150th Day

Earliest date that CR programs can end

End of School Year

Review student's progress on the APS and using other factors, such as student performance, teacher judgment, and social, emotional, and physical development, determine whether each student with an APS is on grade level or still below grade level.

If the student has been on academic probation for the school year and is still below grade level, the school must decide if the student will be retained or go to summer school on probation. Notify the parent that even if the child goes to summer school, he may be retained at the end of summer school.

If the student has not been on academic probation for the school year and is still below grade level, the student may be retained, required to attend summer school, or attend comprehensive remediation on probation the following school year. If a student is required to go to summer school, the decision as to whether the student is ready to achieve at the next grade level is made at the end of summer school. If the student is not ready for the next grade level and is not retained at the end of summer school, the parent and student must be notified that the student is on probation for the coming academic year. The school must inform the parent and the student that if the child is still not meeting grade level standards at the end of the school year the child will be retained.

4th QDC SASI Deadline

All students' APS consequence for all subject areas must be entered into SASI.

End of Summer School

Administer the end-of-summer assessment to students attending summer school on probation. Use the results of the assessment as one of the factors to determine whether the student is ready to achieve at the next grade level.

The South Carolina Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability in admission to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activities. Inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies should be made to the director of the Office of Human Resources, 1429 Senate Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201, 803-734-8505.